



U.S. Department of Justice

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United States Announces Agreement to Ensure Access to the Milwaukee Riverwalk for People with Disabilities

Steven M. Biskupic, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Wisconsin, today announced that a settlement agreement has been reached to provide access to the Milwaukee Riverwalk for persons with disabilities, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA"). The parties to the agreement are the United States Department of Justice, the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Wisconsin, the City of Milwaukee, the County of Milwaukee, and Milwaukee Business Improvement District ("BID") No. 15, which represented the owners of property adjacent to the segments of the Riverwalk addressed in the agreement.

The Milwaukee Riverwalk is a publically accessible walkway along the Milwaukee River which was developed by the City of Milwaukee and local property owners, acting through the BID. The segments of the Riverwalk involved in this settlement extend along both sides of the river from Juneau Avenue to the north and Clybourn Street to the south.

Under the agreement, the City and County of Milwaukee, along with the BID, have agreed to:

- Construct and install ramps, walkways, or lifts in several locations to ensure that the Riverwalk is readily accessible to and usable by persons with mobility impairments;
- Modify, replace or install handrails in appropriate locations;
- Modify built up curb ramps by grinding down the surface in two locations;
- Construct an accessible walkway from the Wells Street parking lot to an existing accessible ramp between Wells Street and Wisconsin Avenue; and
- Remove existing ramps and install new gangways to floating docks in three locations.

It is expected that the cost of these changes will exceed \$1 million.

In addition, the settlement agreement reflects that the City and County has already taken several steps to improve access to the Riverwalk for people with disabilities. These steps have included:

- The construction of a new walkway from Juneau Avenue south to the midpoint of Juneau and Highland Avenues;
- The grinding down of several curbs to create accessible curb ramps;
- The installation of signs at several locations to provide direction to currently inaccessible components of the Riverwalk; and
- The construction, by the County, of a sloped walkway to provide access to the gazebo at Pere Marquette Park.

The settlement agreement will remain in effect for three years, or until the parties agree that full compliance has been achieved.

In a related matter, the United States Attorney's Office and the Department of Justice, in cooperation with BID No. 2, the Historic Third Ward Association, and the Milwaukee Ale House, have informally resolved two issues relating to the accessibility of portions of the newly-constructed Riverwalk south of Clybourn Avenue and extending into the Third Ward. Under this informal resolution:

- The Milwaukee Ale House has constructed an accessible ramp to replace stairs leading from the Riverwalk to the outside patio of the Ale House; and
- The BID has agreed to install continuous handrails to the sloped walkway to the Riverwalk at Buffalo Street.

"We appreciate the cooperation of the United States Attorney's Office in bringing these matters to a successful conclusion," said Ron San Felippo, Chairman of the Historic Third Ward Association and BID No. 2.

In a similar vein, United States Attorney Steven M. Biskupic stated: "We commend the City, County and BID officials for working cooperatively with us to ensure that persons with disabilities will have full access to the Milwaukee Riverwalk. In particular, I wish to acknowledge the contributions of City Attorney Grant Langley and former Deputy City Attorney Pat McDonnell and Assistant United States Attorneys Lennie A. Lehman and Christian R. Larsen."

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